

What is claimed is:

1. A method of automating structured settlements including the steps of:  
collecting and updating candidate data required to identify potential structure candidates;  
5 collecting and updating financial data required to structure settlements;  
computing structured settlement quotations using said candidate data and said financial  
data and integrated third-party quotation programs; and  
communicating said candidate data, said financial data and said quotations to structured  
settlement professionals.

10 2. The method according to claim 1 wherein said steps of collecting data and  
communicating data are performed via an online service.

15 3. The method according to claim 1 wherein said step of collecting data is automated  
by use of local software.

20 4. The method according to claim 2 wherein said online service includes broker  
programs for storing and downloading case data, maintaining diary functionality, and providing  
online reports.

25 5. The method according to claim 2 wherein said financial data is entered into a  
database by a broker.

6. The method according to claim 2 wherein said candidate data is entered into a  
database by a broker.

7. The method according to claim 2 wherein said financial data is entered into a  
database by a broker's client.

30 8. The method according to claim 2 wherein said third party quotation programs  
comprise life company quotation software.

9. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a step of selecting from said third party quotation programs on a menu.

5 10. The method according to claim 9 further comprising the step of invoking said third party quotation program and transferring data required by said third party quotation program to said third party program quotation program from a database of said financial data.

10 11. The method according to claim 10 wherein said transfer step is performed using XML.

12. The method according to claim 10 further comprising the step of transferring data back from said life company software to said database after a quotation process has been performed.

13. The method according to claim 12 further comprising the step of saving proposals including quotation process result in a database using unique proposal identifiers.

14. The method according to claim 13 further comprising the step of performing additional quotation processes using proposals saved during said saving proposals step.

15. The method according to claim 3 further comprising the steps of:  
saving data collected during said collecting steps; and using said data saved during said saving data step in a later automatic quotation process.

16. The method according to claim 15 further comprising the step of saving results from said automatic quotation process in a database.

17. An apparatus for automating the structured settlement process comprising:  
a modular computer network including case source nodes, broker nodes, life company  
nodes and a server (postmaster) node wherein said broker, case source and life company nodes  
5 are in communication with each other and with said server node.

18. The apparatus according to claim 17 further comprising computer software  
executable on said server and case source nodes for collecting and maintaining candidate data  
required to identify potential structure candidates;

10 collecting and updating financial data required to structure settlements; and  
computing structured settlement quotations using said candidate data and said financial data.

19. The apparatus according to claim 17 wherein data is exchanged between said  
nodes using common data protocol, wherein said protocol allows communication between nodes  
15 without services of said server (postmaster) node.

20. A method of automating structured settlements including the steps of:  
collecting and updating candidate data required to identify potential structure candidates;  
collecting and updating financial data required to structure settlements;  
20 computing structured settlement quotations using said candidate data and said financial  
data and integrated third-party quotation programs;

communicating said candidate data, said financial data and said quotations to structured  
settlement professionals;

25 wherein said steps of collecting data and communicating data are performed via an online  
service;

wherein said online service includes broker programs for storing and downloading case  
data, maintaining diary functionality, and providing online reports;

wherein said financial data is entered into a database by a broker;

wherein said third party quotation programs comprise life company quotation software;

30 selecting from said third party quotation programs on a menu;

transferring data required by said third party quotation program to said third party quotation program from a database of said financial data using XML;  
transferring data back from said life company to said database after a quotation process has been performed;  
5 saving proposals including quotation process results in a database using unique proposal identifiers; and  
performing additional quotation processes using proposals saved during said saving proposals step.

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